

Background

Edward Durrell Stone began independent work as an architect with a house for Richard Mandel in Westchester County, New York. Created in partnership with the famous interior designer Donald Deskey, with whom Stone had worked on Radio City Music Hall and Rockefeller Center, the Mandel House was a softened re-expression of the International Style, which had been developed in Europe. Adapted for American tastes and landscapes, the 10,000 square foot Mandel House remained true to the "three canons of the International Style—*architecture as form, asymmetric regularity, and avoidance of applied decoration*," as expressed in the influential 1932 book *The International Style: Architecture Since 1922* by Hitchcock and Johnson. Its pronounced asymmetry, flat roof, open plan, ribbon windows, and semi-cylindrical dining room represented a distinct departure from the norms of American residential architecture to that time. The Mandel House received widespread critical acclaim. It was featured in *Fortune*, *Architectural Forum*, and other publications.



The Richard Mandel House (1935), Bedford Hills, NY



Although the Mandel House was well received by architectural critics, many in the U.S. considered it radical and too large a break with tradition. The International Style was associated with large, expensive, and elitist houses, out of reach to all but the most prosperous Americans. For the style to diffuse, it would have to be recognized and accepted by the middle class in Depression-era America. Stone helped to achieve this goal by developing plans for a relatively modest (estimated cost \$10,000 to \$12,000) International Style house for *Collier's* magazine, a publication with a circulation of more than two million. This was an ambitious project involving a full set of architectural plans (available for \$3), a model by Theodore Conrad (see photos immediately below), and a series of six sequential articles in the magazine during the second quarter of 1936. The articles focused on: (a) an overview of modern architecture; (b) integration of house and garden; (c) interior lighting; (d) financing through government programs; (e) use of new materials for interior decoration; and (f) ergonomic kitchen design. The *Collier's* house was, in essence, a scaled-down version of the Mandel House, designed for middle-class circumstances and budgets. The project was a distinct success—more than 1200 sets of the architectural plans were sold within two months of the initial appearance of the house in *Collier's*. At least seven houses were built from the *Collier's* plans. One, the E.C. Jones Jr. House in West Virginia, received honorable mention in the *House Beautiful Small House Competition* for 1940. The *Collier's* house was obviously a radical departure from the aesthetics of traditional American architecture. Functionally, it also represented a break with the past by concentrating all public areas at the front of the house, and all private functions in the rear, adjacent to the large garden. The design ensured that "function flows between adjacent rooms."



The Carswell House

Stuart Randall Carswell (1891-1949) was a native of Ellesmere, DE, a graduate of the University of Delaware, and a career Army officer. He was severely wounded by inhalation of poison gas in the battle of Chateau-Thierry while serving in a machine-gun unit in France during World War I. His wife, Priscilla Kellogg Whipple Carswell (1907-1991), was born and raised in Chicago, and graduated from the University of Chicago in 1929. Stuart and Priscilla were married in Chicago in 1934.

Between the wars, Stuart Carswell served in West Point, Washington DC, Indiana, and Hawaii. During World War II he was promoted to the rank of full Colonel and made commanding officer of the Army Air Forces Second Command in Albany, NY. He retired on physical disability at the end of the war. He and Priscilla returned to Delaware and began plans to build the home of their dreams, inspired by the series of 1936 *Collier's* articles. Carswell purchased a set of plans from Stone's firm and received advice from Stone in a series of personal letters. The house on Briar Lane was commissioned in early 1948 and completed in December of that year. Carswell suffered a cerebral hemorrhage in the house on January 9, 1949 and died a few hours later, having occupied the property for less than a month.

Priscilla subsequently married James Lewis of Connecticut. They sold the house in 1956 and parceled off more than two-thirds of the property's original three acres. Those parcels became the spearhead of the Nottingham Green development to the west. The Carswell House itself has been occupied since 1956 by a succession of five owners. By 1999, when the present owners purchased the property, the house had deteriorated badly through neglect. Happily, no structural modifications had been made and our restoration, although complex and expensive, involved primarily cosmetic renovations. Particular attention was paid to historical detail and integrity.



Left: Stuart and Priscilla Carswell.

Bottom left: Watercolor painting of Carswell House made in the late 1940s. The pinkish color is artistic license; documentary evidence states clearly that the house was painted white during this era.

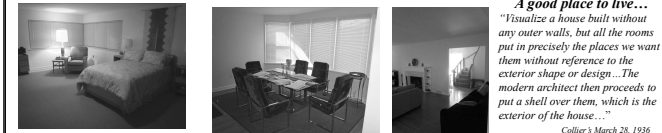
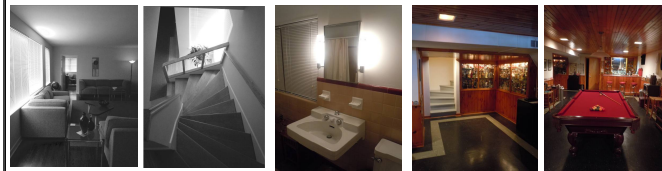
Bottom right: The Carswell House in summer 2003. The house appears virtually unchanged since construction.



CARSWELL HOUSE
1948
HAS BEEN PLACED ON THE
NATIONAL REGISTER
OF HISTORIC PLACES
BY THE UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
DESIGN BY ARCHITECT EDWARD DURELL STONE

Welcome to The Stuart R. and Priscilla K. Carswell House Designed by Edward Durrell Stone

The Carswell House was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in November 2011



A good place to live...

"Visualize a house built without any outer walls, but all the rooms put in precisely the places we want them without reference to the exterior shape or design... The modern architect then proceeds to put a shell over them, which is the exterior of the house..."

Collier's March 28, 1936



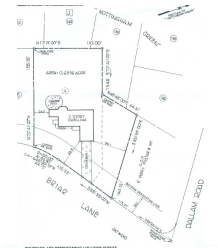
Collier's house kitchen options

Carswell House Kitchen

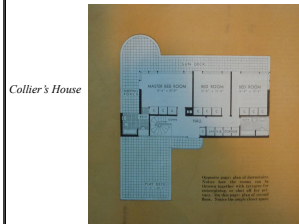
Industrial design details

Right: The Carswell House is situated near the center of a large (0.69 acre) lot, with private landscaped grounds surrounding the structure on all sides.

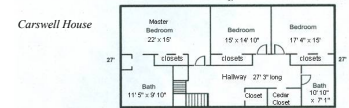
Below: Plans for the first and second floors of the *Collier's* (left) and Carswell (right) houses. The primary difference between the exterior designs of the *Collier's* and Carswell houses is the absence of a cantilevered sleeping porch on the latter. The interior layouts of the two are virtually identical, with one major exception: deletion of the sleeping porch allowed a substantial increase in the size of rooms on the second floor. The Carswell House also incorporates a conservatory and a library, neither of which was included in the *Collier's* plans.



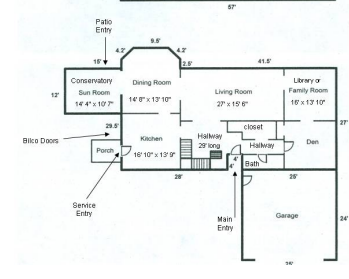
Plans and Dimensions



Collier's House



Carswell House



The Carswell House: "A Machine for Living"

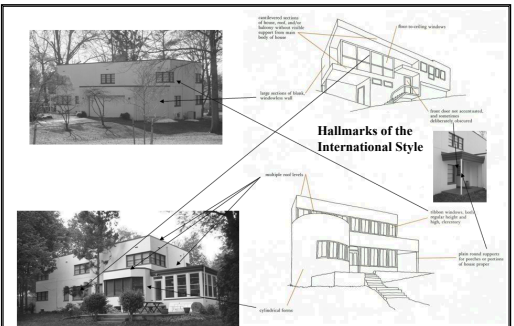
Rooms/Features:

- Four large bedrooms¹
- Library room, shelving for 1500 volumes
- Living room (27' x 15')
- Hardwood floors
- Dining room (15' x 14') with bay window
- Finished basement bar room (40' x 15')
- Finished bar annex room (20' x 15')
- Full bath and cedar sauna in basement
- Four full bathrooms
- East-in kitchen (17' x 14')
- Unique asymmetric fireplace
- Full circular-spiral oak staircase
- Conservatory (heated/air conditioned)
- Built-in bar room display cabinets
- Large (0.69 acre) landscaped lot
- Separate basement entrance
- Outdoor patio
- Oversize two-car garage (25' x 24')
- Nearly 4500 square feet of living space
- Cedar closet
- Lath and plaster interior walls
- Abundant closet and storage space

Structural Features/Utilities:

- Steel beam construction
- High-efficiency natural gas furnace
- Forced-air ductwork throughout
- Updated electrical
- Truscon double-hung steel windows
- Masonry walls, painted stucco exterior
- Central air conditioning
- Kirlin light-diffusing lenses
- Fully enclosed laundry room off kitchen
- Henry Dreyfuss plumbing fixtures

¹Master bedroom is 23' x 15'; second bedroom is 17' x 15'; third bedroom is 15' x 15'; fourth bedroom (currently used as a den on the first floor) is 14' x 9.5'. Bedrooms 1-3 have two closets each. Master bedroom has private bath with separate shower and tub.



Hallmarks of the International Style



"A composition of white cubes..."
E. D. Stone

"A container of space, lightly enclosed by membranous walls"



"Plane surfaces bounding a volume..."

"Uncontrived horizontality..."

Unless noted otherwise, quotes are from the book *The International Style: Architecture Since 1922* by H. R. Hitchcock, Jr., and P. Johnson